FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE AUGUST 4, 2005

Texas Cattle Groups Request World Trade Organization action

The leaders of Texas' two largest cattle organizations, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA) and Texas Cattle Feeders Association (TCFA) have called upon the Bush Administration to pursue World Trade Organization action against those countries that continue to show an unwillingness to open their market for U.S. beef

Many countries closed their borders to imports of U.S. beef following the Dec. 23, 2003, announcement that Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was detected in a cow from the state of Washington. Although 70 of those countries have again allowed U.S. beef imports, negotiations to reopen 28 other crucial markets have apparently stalled in spite of continued efforts by top Administration officials in the ensuing months. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that shortly after the BSE discovery, $4.8 billion in U.S. beef and beef product exports were banned by several countries.

TSCRA President Dick Sherron of Beaumont and TCFA Chairman Charlie Sellers of Amarillo contend that U.S. trade with international customers should resume based on the Office of International Epizootics (OIE) recommendations. The OIE publishes health standards for international trade in animals and animal products. There are 167 member countries of the organization.

In May 2005, the OIE simplified risk categories. Based on these changes, the United States falls in the "Controlled BSE Risk" category. The OIE code recommends imports from controlled BSE risk countries resume under certain conditions. The low BSE-risk products (which may be traded without BSE-related regulations) list was also expanded to now include boneless beef from cattle of all ages.

Sellers, Sherron and the members they represent believe the time has come to ask the World Trade Organization to impose economic sanctions on those countries that have yet to lift the U.S. beef ban. "The United States continues to significantly exceed OIE standards for a BSE controlled risk country," the two leaders said. "It is high time that all available international remedies are brought to bear so that beef trade resumes as soon as possible."

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